



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CDC Gives Maryland High Marks for Readiness Efforts

Baltimore, MD (September 20, 2011) - Governor Martin O'Malley announced today that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) has earned high marks in public health emergency preparedness during the annual Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Centers (CDC) review and evaluation process.

DHMH earned a score of 96 (out of a possible 100) in its 2010 evaluation. The score marks the 3rd straight year that DHMH has improved. DHMH started with a score of 67 in 2008.

“Emergency preparedness is essential to keep our residents and communities safe and secure,” said Governor Martin O'Malley. “This score underlines that Maryland continues to be a national leader in its readiness to respond to any public health emergency or disaster.”

DHMH has worked diligently for several years to plan, prepare and exercise for emergencies and disasters with local health departments and other statewide partners. Over time, DHMH has built an extensive emergency response infrastructure with state of the art equipment, technology and highly qualified personnel.

The CDC report shows Maryland continues overall progress in public health emergency preparedness with an enhanced capability of our State Public Health Laboratory to rapidly and accurately identify infectious agents and notify appropriate authorities. DHMH's expanded capability to receive, store and distribute life saving antibiotics, antivirals and critical medical equipment and supplies also earned high marks. The goal of responding to assistance requests and the ability to rapidly mobilize medications and medical personnel were also acknowledged in the CDC review.

“We are certainly pleased and gratified that our work has received high marks from CDC,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, DHMH Secretary. “Nonetheless, we know that we cannot be satisfied with the results; our work is not done.”

DHMH has also demonstrated significant improvement in detecting emerging diseases and infectious disease outbreaks. The Maryland ESSENCE system (Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics) was one of the first in the nation to enroll all of the acute care hospitals in the state. Through ESSENCE, DHMH monitors daily de-identified information about emergency room patient symptoms as well as data on the use of over the counter (OTC) medications and prescriptions dispensed to patients.

Health experts use all of this information to identify early indicators of disease outbreaks or other unusual medical situations.

To read the Public Health Preparedness: 2011 State-by-State Update on Laboratory Capabilities and Response Readiness Planning Report, click on <http://cdc.gov/phpr/pubslinks/pubslinks.htm>.

For more information about emergency preparedness and response efforts at DHMH, click on <http://dhmh.maryland.gov> and go to the 'Emergency Preparedness' tab at the top of the page.

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